

# NI Bulletin

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## Pieces of *Riel* for Making Cob Planchets

Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC, NI #2704



Lot of 3 pieces of an original riel (strap) for making cob planchets, 129 grams total, very rare, from the 1715 Fleet. 4" x 2-1/2" assembled. With the appearance of three blank cob 8 reales (but slightly heavier), these three pieces fit together perfectly on their broken edges, the other edges naturally rounded, top sides smooth but bottoms rough (as made), no encrustation or markings of any kind, first such item we have ever handled (but see our article "Straps for Cash" for pictures of similar pieces in the old Real Eight Museum). From the 1715 Fleet.

Reprinted from Daniel Frank Sedwick, LLC, Treasure Auction 20, November 12-14, 2016, lot 216. Final value \$US 2585.

["Straps for Cash" also published in the *NI Bulletin* Vol. 46, Nos. 1/2, Jan/Feb 2011, pp. 240-41—*Editor*.]

## Gold Extracted from Silver Captured in the First Opium War CNG



Great Britain, Hanover. temp. Victoria. 1837-1901. AV Medal (16 mm, 2.06 g, 12h). Gold Extracted from Silver Captured in the First Opium War. London mint. Dually dated 1829 and March 1842. **THIS GOLD/ DISCOVERED IN/ SYCEE SILVER/ THE PRIZE OF BRITISH/ ARMS IN CHINA/ WAS EXTRACTED/ AT H.M. MINT/ MARCH/ 1842** in nine lines // **THE R.T HON/ W. GLADSTONE/ MASTER/ BY A PROCESS FIRST/ APPLIED TO THE PUBLIC/ SERVICE AND TO THE/ BENEFIT OF BRITISH/ COMMERCE UNDER/ THE R.T HON./ J.C. HERRIES/ 1829**. BHM 2070; Eimer –. EF. Extremely rare.

From the J. Eric Engstrom Collection. Ex Stack's (30 November 1994), lot 1129.

The China trade was initially a remarkably one-sided affair, with a staggering demand for Chinese goods in the west, but scant need for western goods in China. But in the early 19th century, the British finally found a popular commodity and began to trade Indian opium to the Chinese in exchange for silver. This caused a reversal in flow of specie: where once New World and European silver flowed into China to pay for tea and porcelain, filling the Qing coffers, Chinese silver now flowed west to pay for addictive opium. With the drug not only weakening the minds of the populace, but also the treasury of the state, China banned the trade in opium in 1839, ordering all stocks seized.

British merchants found the prohibition of such a popular trade good unacceptable and the situation soon escalated to war. Unfortunately for the Chinese, the Royal navy's steamships and modern rifles soundly defeated the antiquated Qing forces. The war ended in 1842, beginning what is known as the "Century of Humiliation" for the Chinese. The Treaty of Nanking forced them to cede to the British the city of Hong Kong, as well as pay an indemnity of 21 million dollars in silver. So much silver was paid to the British that, when it was melted down at the Royal mint, enough gold was extracted to permit the striking of a series of small medals.

Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., Triton XX, 10-11 January 2017, lot 1630. Realized \$US 6500 before buyer fee of 19-21%.

*NI*



**A Stolberg Double First**  
**An Unpublished Half Taler on an Unpublished Mule**  
**Robert Ronus, NI #LM139**

The Counts of Stolberg in the Harz Mountains owned rich silver mines and they were prolific producers of silver coinage. The coins were issued by several different branches of the family, with many joint issues. Dr. Karl Friederich wrote what is still the standard reference book on Stolberg coinage in 1911. I recently had the opportunity to examine a very unusual mule which is not in his book.

When Botho VIII the Lucky, Count of Stolberg, died in 1538, his five sons divided their patrimony. Wolfgang was count in Stolberg (1538-52), Ludwig was count in Königstein-Rochefort (1535-74), Heinrich X (or XXI—the family used different numberings) in Wernigerode (1538-72), Albrecht Georg in Stolberg-Königstein (1538-87) and Christof was provost at Halberstadt and later count in Königstein (1574-81). They struck joint coinage in all their names. After Wolfgang died in 1552, they continued for some reason to strike coins in all five names for a few years but then changed to just four names. Eventually Wolfgang's son and heir, Wolfgang Ernst, was added to the group.

This Half Taler mule has the obverse of an issue of the five brothers while the reverse is the obverse of an issue of the four brothers. Here is a detailed description:



Obv.: ★ WOLF ★ LVDOV ★ HENR ★ ALBER ★ GEOR ★ ET ★ CHRIS. Ornate helmet in circle. Friederich 181 & Slg. Fried. 120v (CHRI instead of CHRIS). KM# MB 19.2 (date on rev. 1555). Rev.: Outer legend: leaf MO ★ NO ★ DOM ★ LVDOVICI ★ HENRI ★ ALBERT GEOR ★ ET. Inner legend: CHRISTO ★ COMI ★ IN ★ STOLB ★ KON (igstein) ★ 3-helmets (centre one with shining sun) over 6-field arms of Stolberg (stag), Königstein (lion), Rochefort (eagle), Wernigerode (2 fish), Eppstein (chevrons) over Münzenberg (divisions per fesse) and Mark (checky) over Agimont (horizontal bars), breaking out of inner circle. Unlisted. Like obv. of 1555 Taler Dav. 9852, Fried. 194 (Gedenktaler to commemorate Peace of Augsburg) and KM# MB 34. 35.25 mm. 13.83 g.

The reverse is particularly interesting. It is not in Friederich and appears to be unpublished. The design is, however, the same as a well-documented Taler. According to Friederich, the Taler was issued to commemorate the Peace of Augsburg.

In the decades after Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg in November 1517, Protestantism, especially Lutheranism, spread rapidly across Germany despite the opposition of Emperor Charles V. In February 1531 Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse, and Johann Friedrich I, Elector of Saxony, the two most powerful Protestant rulers at the time, established the Schmalkaldic League as a defensive religious alliance, with the members pledging to defend each other should their territories be attacked by the Emperor. Other states joined them. For a long time Charles V was preoccupied with foreign wars but in 1546 he turned his attention to suppressing Protestant resistance within his empire and on April 24, 1547 he routed the forces of the Schmalkaldic League at the Battle of Mühlberg, capturing Johann Friedrich and other leaders. Despite this victory, by the 1550s, Protestantism had established itself too firmly within Central Europe to be ended by brute force. A small Protestant victory in 1552 forced Charles, weary from three decades of war, to sign the Peace of Passau, which granted some freedoms to Protestants and ended all of Charles' hopes of religious unity within his empire. Three years later, on September 25, 1555, Charles and the Schmalkaldic League signed the Peace of Augsburg, also called the Augsburg Settlement, officially ending the religious struggle between the two groups and making the legal division of Christendom permanent within the Holy Roman Empire. Under the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion) the religion of a prince became the religion of his state and all its inhabitants. Those inhabitants who would not conform to the prince's religion were allowed to leave, an innovative idea in the sixteenth century.

The Stolberg brothers were strong supporters of the Protestant cause. However, it is not clear that this 1555 Taler was struck for the Peace of Augsburg. Friederich makes this attribution mainly on the basis of the centre helmet on the obverse (the reverse of our mule) taking the form of a shining sun, which he interprets as indicating a happy new time. On the other hand, there is no mention of the Augsburg Confession in the legend, contrary to what one would expect.

Whether this Taler commemorates the Peace of Augsburg or not, the Half Taler is unlisted. It is also surprising to find its only appearance as one side only on a mule. Mr. Christian Stoess of the Münzkabinett of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, the largest coin cabinet in Germany, has advised me that they have no record of this Half Taler nor of this mule.

This coin appears to be a Stolberg Double First.

### References:

- Davenport, John S. 1979. *German Talers 1500-1600*. Frankfurt: Numismatischer Verlag P.N. Schulten.
- Friederich, Karl. 1911. *Die Münzen und Medaillen des Hauses Stolberg* Dresden: Kommissionsverlag von C.G. Thieme.
- Nicol, N. Douglas et al. 2011. *Standard Catalog of German Coins 1501- Present, 3rd Edition*. Iola, WI: Krause Publications.
- Wikipedia: articles on the Peace of Augsburg and the Schmalkaldic League.

# 1 Guilder 1954 of Queen Juliana

Paul Oostervink, NI #2787

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Head to the left or to the right? The portraits of the various Kings and Queens on the guilders of the Kingdom of the Netherlands are to right or left. William I looks to the right, William II to the left and so forth alternating with successive reigns.



**Figure 1**  
**Wilhelmina (1880-1962)<sup>1</sup>**



**Figure 2**  
**Juliana (1909-2004)<sup>2</sup>**

The sequence of alternating directions threatened to go wrong with the coins of Queen Juliana (1909-2004). Wenckebach,<sup>3</sup> the designer of the last series of Wilhelmina coins, could have done so in 1948 when Queen Wilhelmina (1880-1962) (Figure 1) abdicated. He proceeded with the portrait of Juliana (Figure 2) but in some kind of auto-pilot or inertia he placed her portrait (Figure 3) in the same direction as that of Wilhelmina.



**Figure 3**  
**Reduction model**



**Figure 4**  
**25 Cent 1949 - Proof**



As early as 1948 mintmaster Van Hengel<sup>4</sup> requested the opinion of Van Kuyk, director of the Royal cabinet of coins, tokens and carved stones, concerning the direction of the portrait. Van Kuyk considered the change in the portrait direction towards the next head of State “more of a habit, or rut, than an informed use”. They foresaw no problems.

At the end 1949 the Minister of Finance, Piet Liefstinck, received two complete series of test strikes (Figure 4). He pointed out that “since 1815 the tradition for this country’s coins is to alternately place the bust of successive royalty to the left and to the right” and decreed that the portrait had to stand to the right. Technically, this was not a problem but this meant that only by March 20, 1950 the first test strikes with the new portrait to the right were ready. After this Juliana (Figure 5) looks to the right and later Beatrix (Figure 6) again to the left.



**Figure 5**  
**Juliana 1948-1980**



**Figure 6**  
**Beatrix 1980-2013**  
**Final year of Guilder 2001**

The MPO Auction (Heritage Auctions Europe) of May 24-28, 2016, offered as lot 2381 a 1954 Guilder test coin (Figure 7) on a bronze flan without edge lettering described as FDC, light eccentric, unpublished and with a reported mintage of two pieces. Jacques Schulman<sup>5</sup> did know of this coin otherwise it would have been listed in their coin handbook. This test coin in bronze of the 1 Guilder 1954 realized 3,400.00 € (US dollar 3,714.50), before buyer fee, sold to the National Numismatic Collection of the Nederlandsche Bank NV, Amsterdam.





**Figure 7**

**1 Guilder 1954 – Proof**

**Bronze, 5.70 g/ diameter 25 mm**

**Image: MPO / Heritage Auctions Europe, nr. 50, 24-28 May 2016. Lot 2381**

**National Numismatic Collection, The Nederlandsche Bank NV, Amsterdam**

**Collection number: DNB-19898**



**Figure 8**

**1 Guilder 1954**

**Silver 720/1000, 6.50 g (4.68 g actual silver weight), diameter 25 mm**

**Mint Prive Marks: Caduceus. Mint: Utrecht**

**Mintmaster: Dr. J.W.A. Hengel (1945-1969). Mintmasters' Prive Mark: Fish**

**Reference: Schulman 1102**

Obverse: Head of the queen to the right with W below the neck W (Prof. L.O. Wenckebach). Legend: **JULIANA KONINGIN DER NEDERLANDEN** (Juliana Queen of the Netherlands). Reverse: Crowned national coat-of-arms between **1 – G** with date on either side of the crown. Legend: **NEDERLAND** (The Netherlands). Edge Lettering: **GOD \* ZIJ \* MET \* ONS \*** (GOD \* BE \* WITH \* US \*).

**Mintage of 1 Guilder**

1954:	6,800,000
1955:	37,500,000
1956:	38,9000,000
1957:	27,000,000
1958:	30,000,000
1963:	5,000,000
1964:	9,000,000
1965:	21,000,000
1966:	5,000,000
1967:	7,000,000

During World War II domestic production of these coins ceased but instead were produced in America, however the secret point is missing on the 1 and the 2-1/2 guilder (*rijksdaalder*). The last secret points in the guilder and rijksdaalder of Wilhelmina were on the 1 and 2-1/2 guilder of 1940! With the Coinage Act of 1948 the silver guilder and rijksdaalder were again reintroduced.

The Law establishing the new coins was published on May 13, 1954 in the Official Gazette (No. 220). One aspect stopped applying the secret control characters on the coins struck in America but with the introduction of the silver guilder and rijksdaalder of Juliana this tradition has been picked up again, made possible by Royal Decree of July 28, 1954.

The secret point (small pearl) was added back on the silver 1 Guilder 1954 of Queen Juliana. On the 1 guilder of 1954 the small pearl (Figure 11) is at 12 o'clock above the cross and then it moves one pearl to the right each production year (no production for 1959 to 1962). In Figure 13 we see that by 1966 the small pearl has moved clockwise 8 places. During the test, however, the coin from 1954 in bronze is missing this small pearl (Figure 10).

A second secret mark is a notch in individual characters of the edge lettering, starting with the letter 'G' for the year 1954. See below (Figure 9).



**Figure 9**  
The security features 1 Guilder 1954–1967 – Juliana



Details on the small pearl positioning follows below.



Figure 10  
1 Guilder 1954, Bronze: No small pearl



Figure 11  
1 Guilder 1954: Small pearl at 12 o'clock





**Figure 12**  
**1 Guilder 1955: Small pearl 1 pearl to the right**



**Figure 13**  
**1 Guilder 1966: Small pearl 8 pearls to the right**

In *De Muntkoerier* of October 2016 still another variant of the silver 1 Guilder 1954 is discussed by Erik van Loon.<sup>6</sup> In this variant the small-pearl secret characteristic is missing above the cross at 12 o'clock. But the second secret characteristic, a notch in the edge lettering characters, appears in the letter 'G' for the year 1954.



**Figure 14**  
**1 Guilder 1954, Silver: No small pearl**

The at the beginning of the 20th century of lot of counterfeits were among the silver coins returned from the former Dutch East Indies (today The Republic of Indonesia). These coins were not only a threat to the economy but meant a lot of extra work for the National Mint in Utrecht. Therefore, the mintmaster at the time devised the idea to provide the guilders produced at Mint of Utrecht with a few secret marks, at inconspicuous places, making the coins readily distinguishable.

All of this no longer necessary because now ‘silver’ copies coming from Indonesia to the Netherlands—mostly brought by tourists—are so bad as to be easily detected as non-silver.

<sup>1</sup> Pieter de Josselin de Jong (1861-1906), portrait of Queen Wilhelmina (1880–1962) – 1900. Painting: oil on canvas (h. 288 cm x w. 202 cm).

[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmina\\_der\\_Nederlanden](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmina_der_Nederlanden)

<sup>2</sup> Jan Alting (1885-1971), portrait of Queen Juliana (1909-2004) – 1950. Painting: oil on canvas (h. 106.5 cm x w. 70 cm). Photo with permission of the Palais Het Loo, Apeldoorn. Inv. nr. RL9529.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Ludwig Oswald Wenckebach (1895-1962) a Dutch sculptor, painter, illustrator, lithographer, sculptor and medallist. His initial ‘W’ is on the front under the neck on the silver 1 guilder and on the 2-1/2 guilder of Juliana.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. J.W.A. van Hengel, mint master for the Netherlands (1945-1969), the Antilles (1952-1969) and Suriname (1957-1969). Mintmasters’ Prive mark Fish.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Schulman, *Handboek van de Nederlandse munten 1795 – 1975 (Suriname, Curaçao en Nederlandse Antillen van 1941 tot 1975)*, fifth printing 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Erik J. van Loon (1941), since 1975 until today a contributor to the *Standard Catalog of World Coins* (Krause Publications – USA). Also publishing in the US coin magazine *World Coin News* and still in the Dutch magazines *De Muntkoerier* and *De Beeldenaar*. Updating the catalog *Muntalmanak* for the areas of Dutch and Dutch Overseas coins.  
<http://munteninfo.blogspot.nl>



## A Stampee Imposter

David Wolfer, NI #2793

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For numismatists, data compiled over time about a particular coin can become as valuable as the coin itself. We use this information to assess legitimacy, gain historical perspective, determine rarity, compare die variations, etc. Occasionally, knowledge that once existed for a given coin can escape our collective memory. It is often the ravages of time combined with general disinterest in the coinage itself that precipitates this event.

One specific coin from the West Indian countermarked series is a case in point. Found within the ubiquitous group of French billon coins produced for colonial use in the Americas commonly known as *stampees*, it was identified at the turn of the 20th Century as a forgery, only to resurface a hundred years later inadvertently embraced as authentic.

Currently, the presence of this illicit piece in standard references is causing certain misconceptions regarding legitimate *stampees* that, if left unattended, will continue to derail our understanding of the series. This article represents an attempt to sort out the confusion. [Images enlarged for viewing, nominal diameter of *stampee* 23 mm—*Ed.*]

### A Charlatan Unveiled

In February, 2015, a French colonial *stampee* was offered for sale in a Heritage Weekly Auction. It had been authenticated by NGC and blessed with an impressive grade of MS63. A search in the NGC Census Report shows it to be the finest graded in its category. This undoubtedly contributed to its strong price of \$376.00.



Figure 1

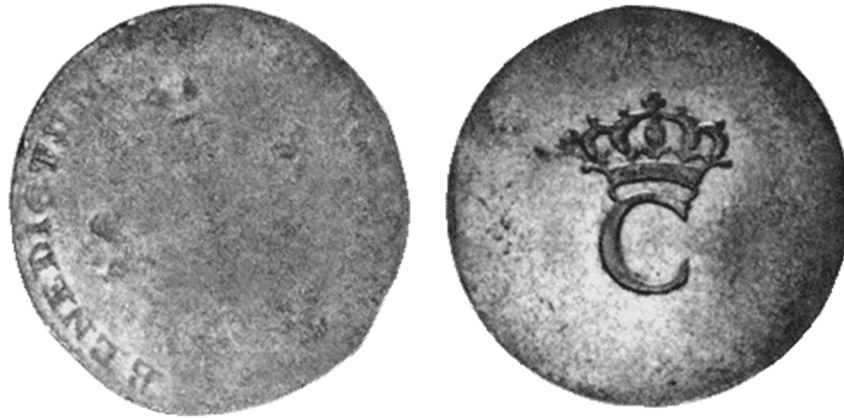
NGC #3808892-001- Obverse

NGC #3808892-001- Reverse

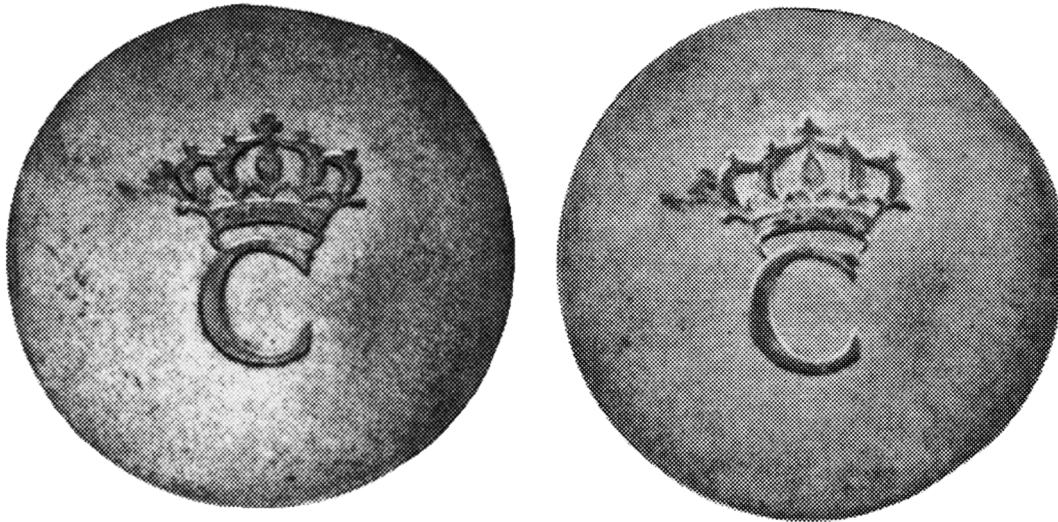
HA.com Ancient & World Coin Weekly Auction- February 12, 2015, lot 62156

Heritage Auctions does an excellent job of photographing the coins they present to prospective bidders. This allows for a close inspection of the abovementioned coin. A careful visual comparison will verify that the obverse and reverse dies used to produce this piece are identical to the dies used to produce the *stampee* (Plate #378 & #379)

found on page 142 of Robert Vlack's, *An Illustrated Catalogue of the French Billon Coinage in the Americas*.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 2a**  
**Vlack Plate #378**



**Figure 2b**  
**Vlack Plate #378 (obv.)**      **Vlack Plate #379**  
**Images courtesy of the Vlack Family**

The NGC MS63 specimen #3808892-001<sup>2</sup> is described in the Heritage Auction sale: *Countermark: Large (12mm) crowned C Note: Countermark on France 2 Sols, KM #500.1.*

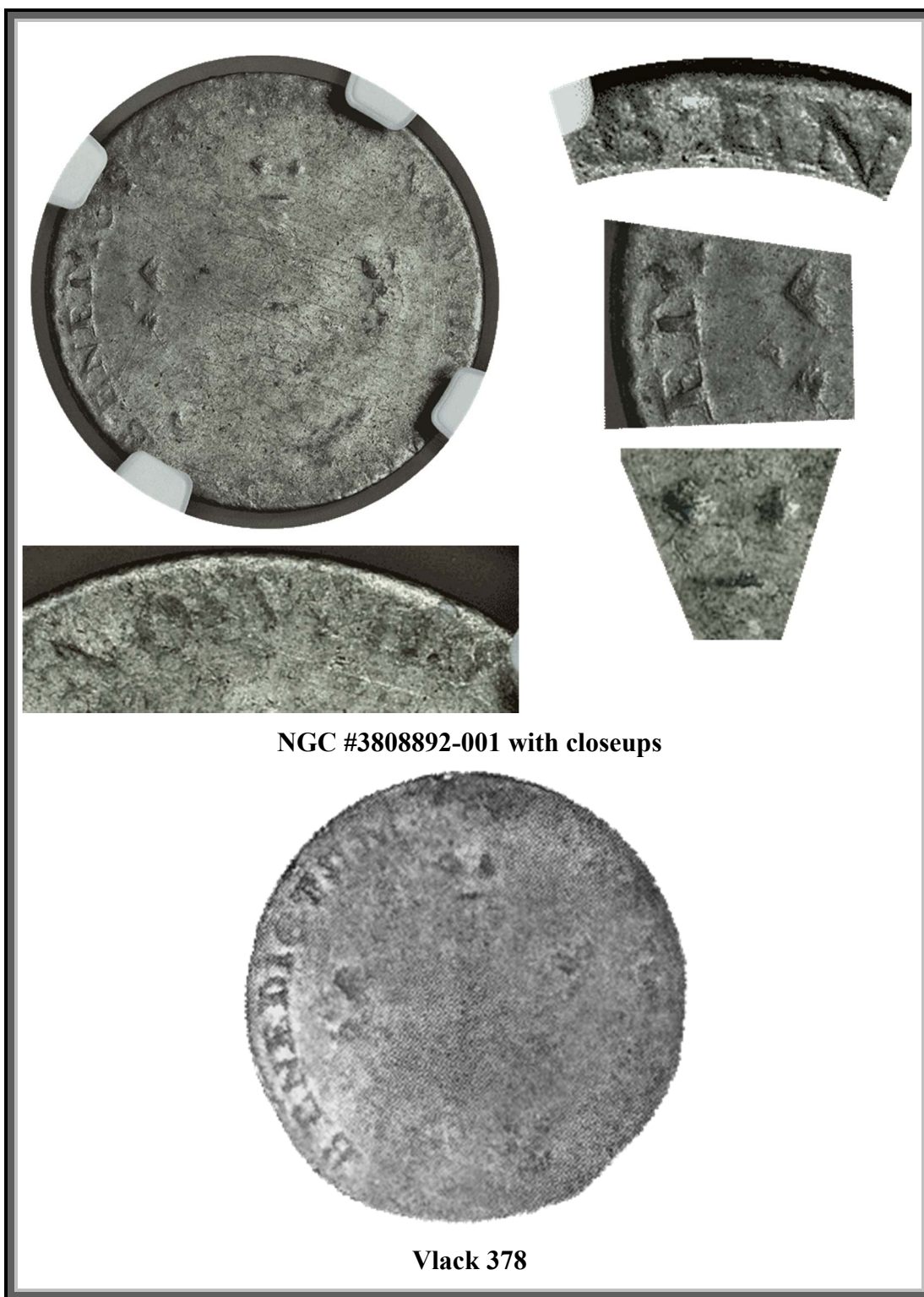
Mr. Vlack identifies his Plate #378 as a Birmingham counterfeit. He identifies his Plate #379 as the issue referred to in Krause as: *KM #2, Counterstamp on blank planchet.*

It is my opinion that all these attributions are inaccurate.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vlack identifies Plate #378 & #379 as two separate stampee types; however, they are two photographs of the same coin taken under slightly different lighting conditions (identified by a stain just to the left of the crown).

<sup>2</sup> The NGC label identifies this specimen as follows: (1763) F. COLONIES STAMPE C/S on FRANCE 2S KM1.1. (The KM# refers the Krause Catalog of World Coins, 1801-1900, where the listing can be found in the French Colonies section.)





NGC #3808892-001 with closeups

Vlack 378

**Figure 3**

Proof of a die match between the NGC MS63 specimen and Vlack example is determined by comparing the visual identifiers found in the reverse lettering of 'BENEDICTUM'. There exists a perceptible gap between the letters B and E when compared to spacing used for the rest of the lettering of 'BENEDICTUM'. The letters 'E' exhibits a left-leaning slant, as does the 'B' and 'D'. In the field, just right of the

letters 'EDI' are two raised lumps. In the field, just to the right of the letter 'M' are two raised lumps and a raised short, straight line that, together, make up a triangular grouping. The lettering 'NOMEN' is barely struck up on the rim opposite 'BENEDICTUM' on both pieces.

Having established the existence of matching die combinations on these two coins necessitates the reevaluation of the NGC attribution as a product of the French Royal Mint because stampees were never produced with a reverse die. The punch used to create royal stampees was applied uniface on old, worn sou marques or newly produced blank planchets. Subsequently, the reverse side of a stampee struck over a sou marque host (opposite the side displaying a Crowned C device) will always show variability, not consistency, in the host coin details that survived the countermarking process, along with variability in positioning of reverse legends relative to placement of the Crowned C stamp on the opposite side. The repetition of this diagnostic on a countermarked coin is indicative of a fraudulent emission.

Both the NGC and Vlack coins display another anomaly on the reverse. The dated sides of French sous marques used as host coins for early issue stampees utilize a legend 'SIT NOM DOM BENEDICTUM.' Our examples reveal the words 'NOMEN BENEDICTUM', an incomplete rendition of a legend belonging to French billon coins that predate the sou marque, known as douzains. The douzain carries a reverse legend reading in full, 'SIT NOMEN DOMINI BENEDICTUM.' The appearance of a non-standard reverse legend would make for an exciting find by some lucky collector, except when found duplicated over multiple specimens.

A specimen from the author's collection is presented here for review. It mimics all the detail diagnostics of the two coins described above. With the proven existence of three identical specimens we can positively conclude that this stampee issue is illegitimate.



Figure 4

Wolfer Specimen- Obverse

Wolfer Specimen- Reverse

Early researchers came to the same determination. Ernest Zay described this forgery in 1892 (Zay: 68, note 1). Howland Wood provided a photographic plate of the fake in his article in the American Journal of Numismatics in 1915, titled 'The Sou Marque' (Wood: 132), and included this succinct description, "An interesting counterfeit of the

earlier type is illustrated (Fig. 6), imitating not only the counterstamp, but also the partially defaced legend of the original marque.”

### **An evolving design**

We are fortunate that the forger was proud of his reverse design. He continued to produce imitations displaying this reverse style even after several revisions of the obverse die. By matching the repeating reverse with changes in the obverse die, we are able to verify that at least two other obverse dies were fabricated over time and reverse lettering underwent minor revisions at least twice.

Our tell-tale reverse shows up on three additional coins that are easily referenced. The first example resides in the American Numismatic Society Collection, listed under the heading ‘West Indies billon 3 Sous 9 Deniers’, ID# 0000.999.36758.<sup>3</sup> On this coin, the reverse lettering ‘NOMEN BENEDICTUM’ has been reworked with more convincing letters and the devices in the middle of the field have been more deeply engraved, although still matching the approximate positioning of reverse details described previously. On the obverse side, one will notice the Crowned C design displaying somewhat cruder engraving work, possibly indicating an earlier version of the forgery.

Another example can also be located in the ANS Collection under ID# 0000.999.36757.<sup>4</sup> Its reverse varies from the other ANS example with the use of a different letter ‘M’ punch in ‘NOMEN and a different, oversized letter ‘C’ punch in ‘BENEDICTUM’ The biggest change, however, is observed on the obverse die. The Crowned C device has been completely re-engraved with a much more elaborate crown and a thicker, wider ‘C’.<sup>5</sup>

This new obverse style is readily viewed in photos of our third example, the Ray Byrne specimen. Sold by the Jesse Peters Auction Company in 1975, Lot #1411 was described as: ‘Stampee ca: 1779 VG-21, Cr10, edge: plain, weight: 2 gr, dia: 23 mm, AU, light toning, Plate.’ This coin should look familiar to many of us because, for years, this obverse photo (presumably taken from the Peters/Byrne catalog) has graced the pages of the Krause Catalog of World Coins, 1701-1800, under the French Colonies Stampee listing, designated KM #2. This same Peters/Byrne obverse photo can also be found in the online NGC World Coin Price Guide under the listing “French Colonies ND Stampee.”

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<sup>3</sup> ANS 0000.999.36758, American Numismatic Society, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://numismatics.org/collection/0000.999.36758>.

<sup>4</sup> ANS 0000.999.36757, American Numismatic Society, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://numismatics.org/collection/0000.999.36757>.

<sup>5</sup> John L. (Jack) Howes, president of Colonial Coin Collectors Club (C4), was the first to suggest to me that the Howland Wood plate (Fig. 6) and ANS specimen #0000.999.36757 were one and the same coin. Visual inspection of both sources verifies this observation.





**Figure 5**

**Jesse Peters Sale No. 78 “Coins and Tokens of the Caribbees” (1975) lot 411**

[Image edited for spacing convenience—*Ed.*]

Honestly, if both sides of the Byrne example had been included in the Krause listing, it would never have been labelled “Counterstamp on blank planchet.”

### **The Birmingham Counterfeits**

We may wonder what separates this forgery from the Birmingham counterfeit stampees; known to have caused such monetary mayhem throughout the West Indies in the early 1800’s. It is generally accepted that authentic stampees and the Birmingham counterfeits circulated contemporaneously. Together, they sustained heavy use within Caribbean communities while facilitating small, local transactions.

Photographic identification of the three known types of Birmingham stampees was attempted by Bob Vlack, along with his opinions pertaining to their manufacture (Vlack, 2004). Some confusion arises from his presentation, however, and it affects our understanding of the stampee forgery under discussion here.

The first two Birmingham counterfeit stampee varieties are presented accurately by Mr. Vlack:

1. Birmingham 1749-A sous marques with crowned C in the die. (Vlack #376, w/plate).
2. Birmingham 1769-A<sup>6</sup> sous marques with crowned C in the die. (Vlack #377, w/o plate).

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<sup>6</sup> This 1769-dated example is the Rosetta stone that exposed the spurious nature of this group of counterfeits because no sou marque was ever issued by the French mint bearing this date. In the Hal Walls auction catalog, Paul Bosco provides some history regarding Lot #703: “Ex-NASCA 12/7/77 #3539, an unidentified coin from Wayte Raymond’s old stock. It was then the discovery coin. Gadoury-Droulers, first edition lists it as *signale mais non confrime* but deleted in the second, possibly after it was confirmed as counterfeit by Bob Vlack ... The date is also noted in Breen, as always a contemporary counterfeit.”



A visual comparison of these two varieties of the Birmingham counterfeit will show a stylistic correlation to each other in the obverse Crowned C design; the crown will exhibit a virtually straight horizontal base which the 'C' encroaches tightly into. This design style is distinctly unique to the Birmingham issues when compared with other stampee emissions.

Vlack lists our forgery as the third Birmingham counterfeit (see Vlack #378). This is in error. The photo that Vlack should have used to identify the third Birmingham counterfeit (which closely matches the design style of his first two Birmingham counterfeit listings) is the photo he used with his listing #375; labelled as an authentic stampee struck over a blank planchet. If the photograph used for Vlack #375 had, instead, been placed with listing #378, Vlack's presentation of the three Birmingham counterfeit stampees would have been accurate.

The third Birmingham counterfeit variety is always found struck on a blank planchet. Its description should read like this:

3. Birmingham undated, crowned C struck uniface over a blank planchet.



**Figure 6**  
**#1- Birmingham Counterfeit- 1749**



**Figure 7**  
**#2- Birmingham Counterfeit- 1769**



**Figure 8**  
**#3-Birmingham Counterfeit- Blank Planchet**

Representative photos of the three Birmingham types above are from the author's cabinet. The similarity in styles is obvious. If carefully compared against the Vlack plates, his misidentified listing order should become readily apparent.

### **A Devious Purpose**

Proper placement of the third uniface Birmingham counterfeit stampee in an accurate presentation of the different stampee types and varieties would leave our forgery without a home. This is as it should be. It is my belief that the forgery under discussion is a separate creature, whose intention was to fool the collector market; not to circulate on a contemporary basis with legitimate stampees.

To persuade the reader of this point of view, the following evidence is offered. First, and foremost, the information just presented regarding visual dissimilarities effectively segregates the forgery from the contemporary Birmingham counterfeits. That does not negate the possibility that it may have originated in Birmingham, England; only that it is not of the same stripe.

We know that multiple examples of this forgery were die-struck to mimic early-issue countermarked stampees produced by the French mint; however, instead of copying the common host coin details, these pieces all display characteristics of a host that has yet to be discovered on any legitimate stampee. It is obvious that the forger's intent was to secure a higher price by falsely fabricating a stampee struck over a rarely encountered host.

The forgery is always found in high grade, with virtually no circulation wear evident. This is most evident on the coin's edge, which appears as if it was just punched from sheet stock. Legitimate stampees are always encountered with paper thin edges worn smooth by heavy wear.

Our fake matches exactly the metrological specifications originally established by the French treasury for new sous marques,<sup>7</sup> yet never do we find these fakes with the variable lower weights one would expect to encounter from coins overstruck on heavily worn planchets.

Both genuine stampees and contemporary Birmingham counterfeit stampees can be found bearing local island countermarks that authorized their use at the turn of the 19th Century. Our forgery, however, is never found with this additional indicator of contemporary circulation; compelling evidence that it arrived later. This fact, along with Zay's citation of its existence in 1892, allows us to surmise that the most probable time frame for its arrival would have been sometime around mid-1800.

It appears this forger was highly successful over the years at deceiving the collecting community, even after the fraud was revealed by Ernest Zay and Howland Wood. Ray Byrne and Bob Vlack, both well-respected and meticulous numismatic researchers, missed the deception, as did Krause and the authentication experts at NGC. These five examples; the NGC MS63 coin, the Vlack specimen, the two examples in the ANS

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<sup>7</sup> Official weight of the sou marque was 2.19 grams. Average production weight, however, was 2 g. or less, due to liberties taken at the various French mints. Both ANS specimens and that of the author weigh exactly 2.19 g. According to the Peters catalog, the Byrne specimen weighs 2 g.; yet, I believe that if it was reweighed today, there is a good chance it would also come in at official specifications.

Collection and the Ray Byrne coin auctioned by Jesse Peters, provide a reference group that is easily utilized for authentication purposes.

After a century of devilry, a forgotten forgery of the French colonial stampee is once again brought to the attention of the numismatic community. With luck, the photographs and descriptions contained in this article will help maintain a degree of transparency regarding its fraudulent nature and conclusively relegate it to the 'rogue' classification it has long deserved.

### Acknowledgements

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We have some very interesting articles this edition and I selected each one for its depth and usefulness to the collector. The Ronus article presents an apparently totally unknown German coin and shows the possibilities of discovering something in a well-established field. The Oostervink article speaks to counterfeit detection and government response in the prior generation, it leads one to consider what will happen in our time? Wolfer addresses the issue of mis-information, fantasies and counterfeits in the market and in accepted references. The CNG article offers us some historical perspective on China relations which should be useful to the thoughtful reader. The Sedwick article reinforces the crude nature of Spanish Colonial wealth transfer from America to Europe. These blank planchets illustrate the manual production techniques used in the making of these popular, collectible, hand-hammered "cob" coins. I hope that you enjoy each of these as much as I have.

Best wishes for the spring auction season!

*Herman Blanton*